

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for producing a vinyl chloride-based polymer, wherein a suspension polymerization of either vinyl chloride monomer, or a mixture of vinyl chloride monomer and another copolymerizable monomer, is conducted in a polymerization vessel fitted with a reflux condenser, said process comprising ~~the steps of:~~

(A) adding to a reaction mixture a high-activity, oil-soluble polymerization initiator, with a 10-hour half life temperature of no more than 40°C at a concentration of 0.1 mol/L in benzene, for a specified time within a period from commencement of heat removal using said reflux condenser through to completion of polymerization,

(B) adding water either continuously or intermittently to said reaction mixture through a supply pipe for said polymerization initiator, at least during a period from commencement of addition of said high-activity, oil-soluble polymerization initiator through to completion of said addition, and

(C) passing steam through said supply pipe following completion of addition of said water.

Claim 2 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein a quantity added of said high-activity, oil-soluble polymerization initiator is within a range from 0.0001 to 0.2 parts by mass per 100 parts by mass of said monomer or monomer mixture.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): The process according to either claim 1 ~~or~~ 2, wherein a rate of addition of said high-activity, oil-soluble polymerization initiator is within a range from 0.3 to 5% by mass of an entire quantity of said initiator per minute.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any one of claims 1 through 3~~ claim 1, wherein a water flow rate is at least 200 g/min•cm² through a cross-section of said supply pipe.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any one of claims 1 through 4~~ claim 1, wherein addition of said high-activity, oil-soluble polymerization initiator is commenced either simultaneously with commencement of heat reduction using said reflux condenser, or within 10 minutes of said commencement of heat reduction, and is completed prior to a polymerization conversion rate reaching 75%.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any one of claims 1 through 5~~ claim 1, wherein said copolymerizable monomer is at least one selected from the group consisting of vinyl esters, acrylate esters, methacrylate esters, olefins, maleic anhydride, acrylonitrile, styrene, and vinylidene chloride.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any one of claims 1 through 6~~ claim 1, wherein said high-activity, oil-soluble polymerization initiator is at least one selected from the group consisting of acetylcyclohexylsulfonyl peroxide, isobutyryl peroxide, α -cumyl peroxyneodecanoate, diisopropylbenzene, diallyl peroxycarbonate, and 3-hydroxy-1,1-dimethylbutyl peroxyneodecanoate.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any one of claims 1 through 7~~ claim 1, wherein a temperature of said steam is at least 120°C.